Faulkner and Hemingway

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THE ANXIETY OF AGON
A Short Biography of a Rivalry

Bullfighting is worthless without rivalry. But with two great bullfighters it becomes a deadly rivalry. Because when one does something, and can do it regularly, that no one else can do and it is not a trick but a deadly dangerous performance only made possible by perfect nerves, judgment, courage and art and this one increases its deadliness steadily, then the other, if he has any temporary failure of nerves or of judgment, will be gravely wounded or killed if he tries to equal or surpass it. He will have to resort to tricks and when the public learns to tell the tricks from the true thing he will be beaten in the rivalry and he will be very lucky if he is still alive or in the business.

—Hemingway, The Dangerous Summer

If we substituted “bullfighting” with “writing” and “bullfighters” with “writers” in the above passage, then we would begin to understand just how strongly competitiveness shaped Hemingway’s views of writing. He saw bullfighters and writers as motivated by their peers to seek greatness, to follow set codes, and to outperform their contemporaries in professions that, to his mind, were defined by rivalry. Such competitiveness held a certain creative value for him: artists’ attempting “to equal or surpass” their rivals could improve their own work. At the same time, such efforts to outwrite and -chance one’s peers could spawn a mutual psychocompetitive influence. As Hemingway traveled to Spain in 1959 to cover brothers-in-law Antonio Ordóñez and Luis Miguel Dominguín in their mano a mano series of bullfights, he was likely thinking of a rivalry between craftsmen of a different sort—that between himself and Faulkner. Since Hemingway’s “prolific” remark in Death in the Afternoon (1932), he and Faulkner had been vying for American literary supremacy with competing-yet-complementary sensibilities. At times, each thought
himself the superior craftsman and spoke of the other accordingly, while also admitting a level of respect and literary camaraderie.

The three-plus decade rivalry between William Faulkner (1897–1962) and Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) was rich, nuanced, and often vexed. It embodied various attitudes: one-upmanship, respect, criticism, and praise. This dialectic of American modernists was manifested textually through their fiction, nonfiction, correspondence, and Nobel Prize addresses. Faulkner and Hemingway used these texts to debate—and spar over—the forms, experimentations, and styles of modernism in America, both indirectly and directly. Their intertextual relationship was unique for both men: it was unusual for the reserved Faulkner to engage so directly and so often with a contemporary, and for the hypercompetitive Hemingway to admit his respect for—and the concomitant possibility of his inferiority to—a rival writer. Commonly, Hemingway’s literary relationships were monochromatic, as in, for instance, his respect for Ezra Pound, or his disdain for John Dos Passos after their friendship disintegrated in the mid-1930s. Likewise, when Hemingway was described as inferior to or derivative of other writers (such as Sherwood Anderson or Gertrude Stein), he distanced himself from and disparaged them because of their influence. His dynamic with Faulkner was different: he simultaneously respected and scorned Faulkner, and Faulkner responded similarly, if a little less harshly. They helped shape each other’s work and aesthetic, manifesting a literary version of what jazz musicians call “trading twelves”—riffing on others’ versions of twelve bars of music in a back-and-forth exchange, much as Faulkner and Hemingway often did in their own writing with a sharp competitive edge.

My central argument, then, is this: their close reading of each other’s works, in tandem with their mixed mutual feelings, spawned an influential, resonant, and sparring body of literature in which each had a psychocompetitive hold on the other. The present examination—part analytical study, part literary biography—of Faulkner and Hemingway illustrates how their artistic paths and principles clashed frequently, as the authors measured themselves against each other for most of their careers. Their allusive novels, nonfiction, letters, and comments, when read together, form a kind of modernist intertext that traces a narrative of intense rivalry, joint psychological influence, riffing, and complementary authorial-masculine performance.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Faulkner and Hemingway were dominant artistic influences in each other’s lives, nor am I arguing that each was the other’s sole creative inspiration or literary model. My focus throughout this study—the first of its kind in book form—will always return to the psychological influence these two writers shared, an influence expressed in their texts, remarks, Nobel Prize addresses, correspondence, and per-
formed selves. I do posit a shared psychological influence in the chapters that follow. This mutual sway did inform some of the authors’ stylistic and thematic choices, but it was primarily psychocompetitive, and only secondarily artistic. For better or worse, they are two of the most significant names invoked in discussions of American literature and culture of the twentieth century. Such a longstanding dialectic between writers of this stature, it seems to me, offers numerous opportunities for further discussion, debate, and intellectual exchange, though with less animus than that between the authors themselves.

RIVALING AMERICAN MODERNISMS

Since Faulkner and Hemingway may have met only once, their writing was their debating platform. Judging by the located correspondence, each talked of meeting the other very infrequently: Hemingway mentioned meeting Faulkner in a July 4, 1952, letter to Harvey Breit; at West Point in April 1962, Faulkner referred to seeing an ill, mentally exhausted Hemingway, but without specifying when and where. It is unlikely that Faulkner would have visited Hemingway at the Mayo Clinic in late 1960 or early 1961, given the seriousness of both men’s health at the time and matters of privacy. Their meeting could be a literary moment waiting to be uncovered, possibly one that occurred after 1931 but before 1952: a piece on Faulkner in the November 14, 1931 New York Herald Tribune notes that he had never met Hemingway, and Hemingway’s July 1952 letter refers to a lone meeting of the authors. No published biographies of either man mention a meeting, which seems at most to have been in passing. Nevertheless, a great many of their letters and texts joust: for instance, Hemingway’s Death in the Afternoon and Faulkner’s The Wild Palms, as will be seen in Chapter 2. Through analysis of various texts and contexts (literary and personal), I will delineate how Faulkner and Hemingway pushed each other to excel and innovate their respective crafts of fiction. This shared motivation and desire to be America’s definitive modernist, I argue throughout, engendered a mutual psychological influence. Oftentimes, each wanted to outshine his rival; in turn, bringing their mutually referential texts under review will reveal how they were locked in a competition throughout their writing lives, a competition in which—in their minds, and possibly in the academy’s—Faulkner seems to have prevailed.

During their long careers, Faulkner’s and Hemingway’s writing lives intersected often, significantly, and complexly. Mutually hyperconscious, they spoke and wrote of each other in public remarks and correspondence,
alluded to each other in their fiction and nonfiction, and read each other’s works shrewdly. Likewise, their personal libraries reveal an acute awareness: Hemingway’s included *Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying, Big Woods, Collected Stories, A Fable, Go Down, Moses, The Wild Palms, Light in August, The Mansion, The Portable Faulkner, Pylon, Sanctuary, Soldiers’ Pay, and The Unvanquished* in his Key West and Cuba holdings. Faulkner’s included *The Fifth Column, Green Hills of Africa, The Short Stories, and To Have and Have Not* on his shelves at Rowan Oak, in addition to uncorrected proofs of *The Old Man and the Sea* now housed at the University of Virginia’s Small Library. With the exception of *The Sound and the Fury*, Hemingway seems to have owned all of Faulkner’s major works. On his part, Faulkner had a peculiar collection of Hemingway’s work—most notably absent from his shelves as far as we know from Blotner’s work were Hemingway’s three finest novels, *The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms, and For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He was nonetheless familiar with their content: he echoed *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* in *The Wild Palms*, *A Farewell to Arms* in his Nobel Prize address, and aspects of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in *The Bear, Requiem for a Nun*, and *The Mansion*. They knew of each other’s writings and held remarkable sway over each other’s competitive ego. As such, their writings evince how each writer was present in the other’s work—figuratively through parallel themes and allusively through direct, sometimes barbed references.

For two writers who had very limited, or no, social contact, Hemingway and Faulkner assumed integral roles in each other’s writing lives. America’s rivaling modernists were often at artistic odds over matters of avant-garde style, structure, setting, and theme; each thought his own choices were better than the other’s different choices. Their works join some of American modernism’s extremes—verbosity and minimalism, all-inclusiveness and omission, and American provinciality and transnationality, as Earl Rovit aptly suggested at the 1999 Hemingway Centennial Conference. That their styles, structures, and settings were simultaneously divergent and complementary led to an acrimonious and long-lasting rivalry, as George Monteiro observed at the Hemingway Centennial Conference vis-à-vis their warring Nobel Prize addresses. Despite their different but equally innovative methods of modernist writing, they also shared key subject matter: hunting, war, a reverence for nature, and personal and artistic explorations of gender, creating a mutual but debating oeuvre of fiction, nonfiction, and correspondence.

Besides owning some of each other’s books, Faulkner and Hemingway were often anxious to read each other’s work and public statements, and even

more anxious to respond in their own work, creating a rich intertextual matrix of mutual influence, guarded respect, and professional anxiety. While certain textual and contextual parallels between the authors have been examined in biographies and other scholarly works, little past scholarship has plotted the expansive grid I offer here. Every statement that Faulkner and Hemingway made about each other was part of a larger context spanning some thirty years. Of course, the authors’ individual importance to an American canon is inarguable. Examining their interrelations can add to what we know of these influential authors—for instance, the provincial Faulkner’s recurring engagements with a fellow writer, the competitive Hemingway’s insecurities and anxieties vis-à-vis Faulkner (which he would always try to suppress), and the nuanced interaction between two mutually influential authors who were involved in more than a monomorphic literary feud.

As rival modernists and artistic foils, Hemingway and Faulkner regularly referred to each other when discussing writing as a craft, as in Hemingway’s *Death in the Afternoon* or their Nobel Prize addresses. Most of their joint criticisms centered on aesthetics and degrees of experimentation, despite Hemingway’s many *ad hominem* comments. Their aesthetic standards governed what they wrote, thought, and said about each other; as might be expected, both men evaluated each other’s work through their personal artistic prisms. Hemingway frequently disparaged Faulkner’s apparent lack of stylistic control and suggested that Faulkner’s writing would be better if it were pared down and disciplined; Faulkner often reproached Hemingway for not taking as many chances as he himself did with sentence length, narrative opacity, stream of consciousness, and nonlinearity. In this sense, their exchange and ways of shaping and innovating American literature effected a symbolic modernist collage, comprised of different ways to “Make it new,” so to speak. Theirs was a competition between two writers who acknowledged, challenged, and augmented each other’s individual artistic worth.

Throughout Faulkner’s oeuvre, “each novel in combination with the preceding ones exerts a visible force on the next, the challenge to resist, to modify, to be ‘original’ increases at each new stage of literary creation.” The same can be said of Faulkner’s rivalry with Hemingway; each would come to represent a similar “visible force” and “challenge” to the other’s professional self-esteem, as evidenced by what might be called their collaborative modernist intertext. As Hemingway would do with him, Faulkner wanted to out-innovate Hemingway and their peers, to be “the best in America, by God” as he told Robert Haas in 1939. He likewise struck a confident and über-creative pose in his 1956 interview with Jean Stein for the *Paris Review:*

3. Watson, 145.
“I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time, too.” This “figure of the artist as God,” Watson posits, is an “explicitly performative statement” in which Faulkner’s self-presentation as a godlike creator impelled him to manipulate and reshape the sources of his fiction—family and local stories, Southern history, his own life, and aspects of Hemingway’s oeuvre in such works as *The Mansion* and “Race at Morning.” Expressly in *Absalom, Absalom!* and more broadly in other works, he “asserted artistic freedom [ . . . ] and authorial sovereignty over his fictional domain.” Like Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner “selects and arranges his material to give it expressive historical form in a new context.” In this sense, Faulkner’s was an aesthetics of revision: of his own texts; stories he had known, invented, or experienced; and Hemingway’s competing works.

Hemingway, too, had aspirations to be “the best in America, by God”; at times, he felt superior to other writers in output, integrity, masculinity, and dedication to craft. As he described his quest for honest and palpable writing in *Green Hills of Africa* to Max Perkins in November 1934: “It is as hard to do as paint a Cézanne—and I’m the only bastard right now who can do it,” unlike “my overassed and underbrained contemporaries, your World Geniuses” he mentioned but did not name in another letter to Perkins four days earlier. Hemingway measured his own professional worth against his contemporaries, most extendedly and complexly Faulkner’s. Of his contemporaries, Faulkner “brought out his competitive instincts [most] powerfully,” Scott Donaldson observes. They “must have been aware that they were engaged in a contest for literary preeminence in their own country and their own time,” engendering an “inevitable tension between them” that, I argue, is symbolically narrated in much of their published and unpublished work.

Studying Hemingway and Faulkner closely illustrates how they developed and explored their artistic ideas through thesis and antithesis (the call-and-response format of some texts) as well as synthesis (the myriad connections, allusions, and similarities between them). In light of their respective prominence, the authors often defined themselves against each other and illustrated “how powerful are the profound urgencies that drive true creativity,” but occasionally with some emotion and “crude” remarks. Their individual creativity stemmed from creative acumen and ability: their strong management of dialogue, personal emotional torment transferred to and transformed in their characters, and mode of remembering, reshaping, and

5. Qtd. in Cowley, *Writers at Work*, 141.
7. Ibid., 148.
10. Rovit and Waldhorn, 158.
stylizing experience. At another level, each man’s awareness of the other’s artistic viability impelled him to cultivate and enhance his work further. Though they assailed each other in print, Hemingway and Faulkner also communicated through their texts via shared images, themes, and (guarded) compliments. Their engagement manifested what Harold Bloom calls in *The Anxiety of Influence* the “dialectic between art and art” inherent in such authorial relationships. Hemingway and Faulkner were concurrently fellow modernists and competitors who incarnated the “agonistic basis of all imaginative literature”—they produced a wealth of work that is a study in contrasts, conflicts, and psychological influence.\(^\text{11}\)

In this project, I examine the tense, shared, and psychological influence between Faulkner and Hemingway in an intragenerational context, coupled with notions of rivalry and masculine performativity. Their competition was multi-dimensional and long lasting, demonstrating how they influenced each other literarily and, more so, psychologically. Literarily, Faulkner and Hemingway impacted some of each other’s work. Faulkner did not lead Hemingway to his minimalism, and Hemingway did not lead Faulkner to his loquaciousness and epicity. Nevertheless, each man’s writings and ideas could inform the other’s and their intertextual duel. Once they became highly conscious of each other in the 1930s, certain artistic choices were, to a degree, dictated by this mutual awareness. Would Hemingway have, as he wrote to Faulkner in July 1947, enhanced his chance-taking in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* if not in part for his quest to outdo him? Likewise, *Across the River and into the Trees*, The Old Man and the Sea, and his numerous unfinished works of the 1950s point toward the same kind of chance-taking, an act that Faulkner’s presence and prodigiousness stimulated in Hemingway. Similarly, Faulkner arranged *The Wild Palms* with Hemingway in mind. A symbolic microcosm of this rivalry, the book’s point-counterpoint structure would not have the same contextual resonance without all of its conscious allusions to Hemingway, which show Faulkner offering his vision of their complex relationship. Most notably, their Nobel Prize addresses—arguably their principal aesthetic declarations—would have been markedly different without the two decades dialectical interaction, direct and oblique allusions, adaptation, wordplay, and quotation preceding them.

Beyond such artistic influence lay an even stronger psychocompetitive influence. Each modernist aspired to be the uppermost American writer, inevitably at the other’s expense. In terms of popularity and financial success, Hemingway was definitively prominent; in terms of artistic value, they vied for prominence. When Faulkner started to eclipse Hemingway in the early 1950s with numerous awards, more books, and international

\(^{11}\) Bloom, 99, xxiv.
acclaim, his feelings of superiority were countered by Hemingway’s feel-
ing of insecurity, anxiety, and defensiveness. Faulkner wanted to surpass
Hemingway, so he could not let the criticism of him in *Death in the After-
noon* go without countering it in *The Wild Palms*. Perhaps Faulkner would
not have responded if an inferior—and less psychologically influential—
writer had levied the same criticism of his productivity. Likewise, Faulkner’s
1947 ranking of Hemingway would not have stung the latter so much had
it come from one of his perceived inferiors. While each postured against
the other, Hemingway was more explicitly threatened by Faulkner than the
reverse, hence his recurrent hostility. It was typical for Hemingway to deni-
grate those writers whom he knew were good, even better than he. Some of
his actions and comments about Faulkner reveal a certain insecurity that
Faulkner, to a lesser degree, could share. Had they not wanted to outdo one
another, they may not have engaged and dueled with each other so sharply
and for so many years.

As decades of Hemingway scholarship have established, Hemingway’s
relationships with his contemporaries embodied a sharp sense of conflict.
He wanted to eclipse Stein, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Steinbeck, Faulkner, and
the rest of his American modernist peers. Faulkner, too, situated himself
vis-à-vis his generation agonistically; his competitiveness, more understated
and indirect than Hemingway’s, was still quite strong. As these would-be
archetypal modernists saw it, a way to effect newness was to experiment and
take their art in directions untried by their predecessors, even by themselves.
Another way Faulkner and Hemingway sought such avant-gardism was to
disassociate themselves from literary tradition through misreading, revision,
and a competitive worldview. These related notions of authorial self and
literary craft are significant to my critical treatment of how two American
modernists traded influence, when a “radical dissatisfaction with the artistic
past” was thought to require rich innovation.12 Such artistic “dissatisfaction,”
at some level, sparked their need to revise tradition. This need framed virtu-
ally every facet of the Faulkner–Hemingway rivalry: textual (mis)readings
and jousting; comments in letters; their dynamic of one-upmanship; and
their broader opinions of each other.

Although both writers were aware of and somewhat unsettled by this
psychocOMPetitive influence, Hemingway felt an attendant anxiety more
acutely than Faulkner did. Because Hemingway saw writing as a contest
and, as such, wanted to cut down his seeming opponents, he strongly denied
most outside influence. While Hemingway was always the more celebrated
and affluent writer, indeed the quintessential writer-as-celebrity, Faulkner

by and large emerged as the better artist of the two by their careers’ end—at least in the eyes of the authors themselves, thus some of their attitudes. On his part, Faulkner respected Hemingway and praised him on occasion, but he was typically reserved in responding to Hemingway’s criticisms. Regardless of his importance and success, Hemingway could feel inferior to Faulkner, as demonstrated by his insecurity and overreactions to anything linking them, such as Faulkner’s assessments of his work, or his potential superiority, as when he won the Nobel Prize first. Hemingway was loath to admit another’s superiority, occasionally denying any derivativeness or inferiority with marked hostility. Donald Ogden Stewart, one of his companions during their Paris years, was aware of Hemingway’s treatment of his friends and fellow writers. In a 1972 interview, Stewart recalled the volatile dynamic between Hemingway and his writing friends—who were, in Hemingway’s mind, rival writers first:

[T]he minute he began to love you, or the minute he began to have some sort of an obligation to you of love or friendship or something, then is when he had to kill you. Then you were too close to something that he was protecting. He, one-by-one, knocked off the best friendships he ever had. He did it with Scott; he did it with Dos Passos—with everybody. I think that it was a psychological fear he had that you might ask something from him. He didn’t want to be overdrawn at your bank.13

Stewart captures Hemingway’s stridently competitive personality vis-à-vis friends who were also writers, particularly those to whom he felt indebted. For instance, Fitzgerald helped him switch publishers from Boni and Liveright to Scribners in 1926, and Hemingway eventually responded by condescendingly treating Fitzgerald in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” and A Moveable Feast as a writer who sacrificed his talent for money and for his needy, domineering wife. In A Moveable Feast, furthermore, Hemingway declared his creative autonomy concerning Fitzgerald’s guidance on The Sun Also Rises: “I do not remember when I showed finished things to him first [. . . ] nor when he first saw the proofs on the rewritten and cut version. We discussed them. But I made the decisions. Not that it matters”14—except that it did matter to Hemingway. Greatly.

The same can be said of Hemingway’s handling of Anderson and Stein, two of his early mentors who found themselves the targets of his invective in, respectively, The Torrents of Spring and A Moveable Feast. Although Hemingway did not have the same kind of social relationship with Faulkner

as he did with other contemporaries, his treatment of Faulkner stemmed from similar attitudes. He was not indebted to Faulkner for introducing him to literary Paris as he was to Anderson, but he increasingly felt less significant artistically, which cloaked his own popularity, abilities, and acclaim. Faulkner seems to have sensed a similar dynamic, that he himself had achieved less wealth and popularity but more artistic value.

Hemingway and Faulkner were keenly aware of each other’s artistic contributions and experiments. Each saw the other as his staunchest adversary; one can see their strong egos and shared influence imprinted on a variety of texts that acknowledge what the writers did not, at least overtly. In this sense, Dennis Brown’s *Intertextual Dynamics within the Literary Group* offers a useful model for examining writers’ influence and exchange in an intragenerational context. In particular, Brown studies the rich, longstanding intertextuality between Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Lewis. He analyzes the impact of *Ulysses* on both *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos* in terms of style, imagery, and themes; likewise, he locates “aspects of *Ulysses*” in Lewis’s *Enemy of the Stars* and *Tarr*. For Brown,

[T]he main literary texts of the Men of 1914 [... ] should, in important ways, be considered less in terms of individual stylistic development than as a series of moves within an overall intertextual group-game. The game, built up in terms of mutual appreciation and rivalry over some fifty years in all, is predicated on a common assumption—that each writer is involved in a concerted project to create new literature for the new age, our own.

Faulkner and Hemingway engaged in an analogous “intertextual group-game” with similar attitudes of “mutual appreciation and rivalry.” Brown’s framework helps outline the nuanced ways in which the Faulkner-Hemingway intertextuality formed an artistic relationship between them, more or less concomitant with their European counterparts. Brown also argues that the Men of 1914’s intertextuality was rooted in “creatively-aware levels” and “unconscious behavioural interchange,” just as Faulkner and Hemingway consciously and unconsciously dueled. And, although the authors were social acquaintances,

[T]he power of group-feeling was essentially provided by the fantasy fellowship and rivalry generated by Pound’s primarily-mental construct, which associated them together as the four leading writers of their generation—

16. Ibid., 1.
and, indeed, the four men would communicate to each other far more in terms of their literary texts than their table-talk.¹⁷

As such, coeval artistic relationships are informed by but independent of social relationships. Contextually, it was important that Pound helped Eliot edit and revise *The Waste Land* in the early 1920s, but their intertextuality and the larger “symmetry of the group” would have existed without such counsel.¹⁸ Brown sees Eliot’s poem as a convergence of these four authors’ “aims and energies”: the opening suggests Lewis’s *Tarr*, the poem’s motifs of death and aridity borrow from the “Calypso” section of *Ulysses*, and Pound’s editorial work improved the poem, all of which turned it into a figurative “group production.”¹⁹ Brown locates the primary importance of this somewhat competitive “fourway dynamic” in their texts.

Relatedly, the Faulkner–Hemingway rivalry was another “primarily-mental construct.” The authors jousted textually in what was a multileveled artistic rivalry between the two “leading writers of their generation” in the American milieu. For Brown’s Men of 1914 and, by extension, Faulkner and Hemingway, their works take part in “recapitulating mutual group-dynamics and [abound] in intertextual reference”; their “game” is flush with cross-referencing and recasting, complete with the competitiveness and dual motivation connoted by *game*.²⁰ This paradigm of self-aware intertextuality among contemporaries will help illustrate why and how Faulkner’s and Hemingway’s evaluations of one another as modernists and influences found exclusive expression in their writing, occasionally articulated with sports metaphors and language. In large part, they were highly aware of themselves as the era’s prominent and dueling male writers. Their intertextual influence and rivalry crystallizes further when viewed through a related prism—their sense of themselves as men.

“TO BE A CHAMPION” AND A MAN

“Shifts in gender relations at the turn of the century were a key factor in the emergence of Modernism.” In addition to being a time of artistic revolution, the modernist era also saw new social attitudes emerge: for example, Alain Locke’s New Negro, the Flapper, and the New Woman. The “radical implications of the social-cultural changes feminism advocated,” Marianne

¹⁷. Ibid., 2, 4.
¹⁸. Ibid., 4.
¹⁹. Ibid., 97–99.
²⁰. Ibid., 4.
DeKoven continues, “produced in modernist writing an unprecedented preoccupation with gender, both thematically and formally.” During this time of social and artistic upheaval, authors became more aware of how their constructs of gender intersected with their writing and aesthetic principles. Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and others were conscious of their gendered identities and othered sexuality (bisexuality and lesbianism, respectively), which is apparent in much of their writings and ideas—see, for example, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

During the modernist era, art and gender roles were being actively remade and rethought, as the works of Woolf, Stein, D. H. Lawrence, H. D., and many others demonstrate. Faulkner and Hemingway were likewise sharply attuned to their roles as male modernist authors; their notions of gender and performances as twentieth-century American men overlap with their shared influence and intertextuality. Gender, particularly their ideas of masculinity, was an important component of their literary experiments, personae, and attitudes toward one another as they enacted similar models of the masculine. Such “*stylized repetition of acts,*” Judith Butler posits more generally, enables men to “perform” their masculine self-images. Butler further associates gender with conscious performance:

> [T]he action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established[ . . . . ] Although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this “action” is a public action.

One sees a version of this performative model in Hemingway’s and Faulkner’s lifelong public posturing, or “sustained social performances” in Butler’s sense. As an authorial celebrity, Hemingway was in the public eye much more than Faulkner, yet both men adopted and performed similar personae—wounded veteran, hunter, outdoorsman, paterfamilias (“Papa” Hemingway, “Pappy” Faulkner), adulterer, and competitive male writer. In concert with their competitive professional awareness, such “public action” further shaped their writing, relationship, and reception by readers and the public.

Despite their similar public masculinities, the two men enacted their roles differently. Hemingway, the über-macho celebrity writer, was staunchly competitive with other writers (both dead and alive), and he publicly associated himself with dangerous, rugged activities where courage was requisite:

22. Butler, 140, 141.
war, bullfighting, big-game hunting, boxing, and deep-sea fishing. “Over time,” Scott Donaldson reminds us, “Hemingway became a celebrity rather than a famous writer,” “a legendary figure” who nonetheless managed his career and publicity rather well. His masculine self-image also affected his relations with family, wives, friends, fellow writers, and critics, toward all of whom he could direct his aggressive and controlling personality. As a writer \textit{qua} sportsman, Hemingway defined his authorial role in terms of sport, often boxing, baseball, and horseracing, thus intertwining his writing and self-image as an active, competitive man. As he wrote to Charles Scribner in September 1949, he wanted to be seen as the “champion of the world”—the writing world, that is:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Henry James I would just thumb him once the first time he grabbed and then hit him once where he had no balls and ask the referee to stop it.

There are some guys nobody could ever beat like Mr. Shakespeare (The Champion) and Mr. Anonymous. But would be glad any time, if in training, to go twenty with Mr. Cervantes in his own home town (Alcalá de Henares) and beat the shit out of him. Although Mr. C. very smart and would be learning all the time and would probably beat you in a return match. The third fight people would pay to see. Plenty peoples.

\[ \ldots \]

Know this sounds like bragging but Jeezoo Chrise you have to have confidence to be a champion and that is the only thing I ever wished to be.\end{quote}

Despite some facetiousness here, Hemingway’s competitiveness was often in overdrive, pushing him in this letter and elsewhere to challenge Melville, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Maupassant, and others he saw as worthy models. Hemingway presents himself here as the macho, pugilistic writer prepared to challenge virtually anyone for aesthetic supremacy, Messrs. Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and “Anonymous” excepted. By extension, that James “had no balls” speaks to how Hemingway braided masculinity and art—he felt superior to James as a writer and as a man. He had made a snide reference to James and his (possibly) injured genitalia in \textit{The Sun Also Rises}, when Jake and Bill discuss Jake’s own injury in Chapter 12: “I just had an accident,” Jake says, to which Bill responds “‘That’s the sort of thing that can’t be spoken of. That’s what you ought to work up into a mystery. Like Henry’s bicycle.”\end{quote}

As Michael Reynolds reminds us, “Ford Madox Ford, who had known James, told Ernest that James had suffered some sexual wounding that left him unfit

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Donaldson, \textit{By Force of Will}, 12, 1.}
\footnote{Hemingway, \textit{Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters}, 673.}
\footnote{Hemingway, \textit{The Sun Also Rises}, 120.}
\end{footnotes}
Highly aware of his own masculinity, Hemingway likewise wanted to publicize it, hence his “self-conscious literary braggadocio” as self-professed “literary heavyweight champion,” as Rena Sanderson has fittingly termed it.

Hemingway’s gender sensibility was in constant flux. At times he felt himself to be the hypermasculine, hyper-public writer; at others he felt insecure when his writing was questioned. He often expressed his insecurities through self-aware displays of his sense of masculinity, such as responding to criticisms with threatened or, on a few occasions, real violence—namely, that against Max Eastman and Wallace Stevens in the 1930s. Since Hemingway interwove writing and masculinity, he sometimes interpreted his secondary artistic status vis-à-vis Faulkner as a slight against his masculine self-image. Hemingway seemed to feel, or fear feeling, “feminized” by Faulkner’s artistic dominance in the 1950s, as Faulkner won numerous awards and received much more artistic acclaim. His response was to feminize Faulkner, as a few letters indicate. As Robert Trogdon has recently shown in *The Lousy Racket*, Hemingway even referred to edits of obscenities made to his manuscripts as a kind of emasculation. Because Hemingway interpreted his writing—and threats to it—as a bellwether of his masculinity, he overreacted in stereotypically masculine ways to anything suggesting his inferiority to Faulkner, once going so far as to imagine a duel between them.

For his part, Faulkner also felt himself to be in a mano a mano bout with Hemingway, but much less pugnaciously and apprehensively. Like Hemingway, Faulkner was a devoted hunter and outdoorsman throughout his life, and he enjoyed such male-bonding experiences. Yet, he did not publicly associate himself with these traditionally male activities to the extremes that Hemingway did. Oxford locals knew of Faulkner’s outdoor activities, but there were few, if any, national-magazine pictorials of Faulkner hunting in southern Mississippi. (Ironically, the July 14, 1961, issue of *Life* commemorating Hemingway also included a story about Faulkner as both writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia and avid fox hunter, yet another textual intersection.) Faulkner’s love of hunting, horses, and the natural world shaped and inspired his art, but he did not feel as strong a need to overperform his masculinity, hence his not writing feature journalism pieces chronicling his outdoors exploits as Hemingway did. Although Faulkner did not act with a boastful, macho swagger, he publicly enacted his manhood.

27. Sanderson, 170.
through the roles of wounded soldier, hunter, patriarch, adulterous husband, and writer.

Faulkner also coupled writing and gender, but not as inextricably. For instance, he repeatedly stressed that his 1947 ranking of Hemingway as the era’s fourth-best writer was a criticism of Hemingway’s artistry, not masculinity, regardless of Hemingway’s conflation of man and author. When criticizing Hemingway’s writing, he focused almost exclusively on what he saw as its artistic shortcomings without resorting to ad hominem commentary. Unlike Hemingway, Faulkner interpreted criticisms of his writing largely along aesthetic lines, not as attacks against his manhood, in part because he felt himself to be a better writer and in part because he was seemingly more secure in his masculinity. Although he may have been envious of Hemingway’s greater fame and wealth to some degree, Faulkner was not as explicitly anxious about Hemingway as the latter was of him. Yet, his sense of his own masculinity shaped his views and textual treatment of Hemingway.

Faulkner and Hemingway may have looked at and projected themselves as men differently, but they both knowingly performed their culturally constructed definitions of the masculine in their works and public personae. Relatedly, both were competitive and wanted to outdo each other as artists, to be the author of their milieu. One rarely sees female writers engaging in the same kind of adversarial relations as Faulkner and Hemingway or, later, Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal, and John Updike, or Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright, or Mailer and other of his contemporaries. Such fierce competitiveness and one-upmanship seems especially prevalent between male writers. Surely, female writers feel a sense of competitiveness with one another, but the mentality of rivalry is more marked in interactions between male writers, largely because men are socially constructed to be more aggressive and confrontational.

Artists at all levels regularly experience some form of mutual rivalry and exchange, and such dynamics generally blend respect, animus, and one-upmanship. As with any relationship between contemporaries—Poe and Longfellow, or Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin—the Hemingway–Faulkner rivalry was polychromatic and volatile. They were quick to express praise, even quicker to express criticism or take umbrage, but are nevertheless linked by their competing and jointly influential artistic sensibilities. As Earl Rovit has suggested, “Each studied the other’s work with the keenest interest; each was strongly influenced by the other’s style, range, and public persona; and both together created an interlocked dialectic which formed a constellation within which their contemporaries orbited.”29 As contempo-

raries, Faulkner and Hemingway felt a sense of rivalry and competition; as artists, they shared respect, admiration, and influence: this uneasy balance underpinned the three-plus decades of their competitive relationship.

While it is more common to see Hemingway paired with F. Scott Fitzgerald in studies examining social and artistic relationships, Hemingway and Faulkner were linked artistically, psychocompetitively, and intellectually. Although their writing styles, aesthetic philosophies, and personal experiences are easily paired contradistinctively, their strong similarities and psychological influence counterbalance such differences. Despite the vast scholarship on each author, the Faulkner–Hemingway rivalry has not received such thorough critical treatment as I want to offer here. As of late 2011, there have been only two book-length studies—Linda Welshimer Wagner’s *Hemingway and Faulkner: Inventors/Masters* (1975) and Earl Rovit and Arthur Waldhorn’s edited volume, *Hemingway and Faulkner in Their Time* (2005), which collects assessments of the authors by their contemporaries and themselves. Wagner’s book is useful as a separate treatment of Hemingway and Faulkner; she alternately examines their careers, the development and textual expression of their aesthetic principles, and how their late works dovetail with their early works structurally and thematically. Though Wagner does not examine them simultaneously as modernist competitors, her work is nonetheless valuable in its view of the authors’ important “devotion to literature” in their “search for innovation” and, I would add, in their appraisals of each other.


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30. Some of the earlier critical treatments may have been unavoidably limited in terms of archival study because the Hemingway Collection at Boston’s John F. Kennedy Library was not opened until 1980. The Kennedy Library, in particular, has been an invaluable resource for me, enabling me to examine many of Hemingway’s unpublished letters for their references to Faulkner.

INTRODUCTION

responding to the masculine and militaristic codes of their era. Sections of David Earle’s *Re-Covering Modernism: Pulps, Paperbacks, and the Prejudice of Form* (2009) convincingly discuss Faulkner’s and Hemingway’s involvement with pulpism and popular magazines, seen especially through *Sanctuary, Pylon, The Wild Palms, To Have and Have Not*, and the numerous—often salacious—paperback editions of their works.


Even though some works—Malcolm Cowley’s *The Faulkner–Cowley File* (1966) and the articles by McHaney, Howell, Hays, and others—acknowledge textual similarities, they tend to be more implicit in encouraging a broader view of Faulkner and Hemingway as longtime rivals. At least recently, Rovit and Monteiro seem to have been the most explicit in taking a longer view. While building on such scholarship, I want to offer an even more overt study of how these authors’ bodies of work—published and archival—trace a sequence of psychological influence, cross-textual reference, and gender that demonstrates convincingly how they competed for artistic primacy and figuratively authored a multivalenced, multi-toned intertext.

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*Faulkner and Hemingway* opens with four chronological chapters and closes with a more concluding chapter, each isolating a particular period of the Faulkner–Hemingway contest. Chapter 1, “Modernism, Postwar Manhood,
and the Individual Talent: Maturing in the 1920s,” establishes a literary context, delineating the models of modernism that Hemingway and Faulkner followed in their own work and in their appraisals of each other. This chapter considers the authors’ early writing lives—their experiences during World War One, (embellished) personas as heroic veterans, and respective apprenticeships to Sherwood Anderson. During the 1920s, both writers matured artistically, began to hone their aesthetic theories, and published their first masterpieces, *The Sound and the Fury* and *A Farewell to Arms*, within ten days of each other in 1929. During these fertile years, Anderson supported each writer but met largely with satire in return: Hemingway’s *The Torrents of Spring*, Faulkner’s *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles* and *Mosquitoes*, and other comments each made about Anderson, all of which reveal a common anxiety over his influence on their lives, writings, and authorial self-constructs. This decade’s links—similar masculine personas and Anderson—occurred when Faulkner and Hemingway were making some of the same choices: trying to craft innovative and individual styles, performing as wounded soldiers in their respective home states, and situating themselves in their milieu in somewhat competitive terms.

Chapter 2, “Petulant Jibes, Catfishlike Uncatfishivity, and Hemingwaves: The Rivalry Escalates in the 1930s,” examines how, as their artistic stature and careers as public authors rose, Hemingway and Faulkner became competitively aware of each other. Concurrently, they became involved with Hollywood (Faulkner as a screenwriter; Hemingway as adapted author), and they were published together in Faulkner’s poetry collection *Salmagundi*, which contained Hemingway’s early poem “Ultimately.” During this decade, references and criticisms in their letters, *Death in the Afternoon, Pylon*, Hemingway’s “On Being Shot Again” (*Esquire*, June 1935), and *The Wild Palms* will reveal a sharper awareness and psychological sway. Their civil war texts of the 1930s—*The Unvanquished* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*—demonstrate war as a common theme, and that Faulkner had psychologically influenced Hemingway in what might be the latter’s most significant, experimental published novel.

Chapter 3, “‘Glad to Shoot It Out’: Ranking and Dueling in the 1940s,” examines the decade that saw two direct textual crossings: Faulkner’s “Turn About” appeared in *Men at War* (which Hemingway edited in 1942) and Faulkner cowrote the screenplay for *To Have and Have Not* in 1944. More importantly, letters became a dominant forum for them to sound off about each other. In addition to assessing both writers’ letters to and interactions with Malcolm Cowley, I thoroughly examine Faulkner’s April 1947 ranking of his coevals, the correspondence that Faulkner and Hemingway exchanged afterwards, and Faulkner’s equivocal comments about his ranking in New
York, Japan, and Virginia. Faulkner’s ranking sparked the central episode of this vexed relationship, as did his choice not to retract it.

Chapter 4, “Nobel Laureates, Wolves, and Higher-Ranking Writers: Crescendo and Decrescendo in the 1950s and 1960s,” delineates the final stage of their tempestuous relationship. Between 1940 and his death in 1961, Hemingway published few books, while Faulkner was much more prolific. This imbalance affected the two authors’ interrelations and self-esteem. Faulkner radiated confidence, while Hemingway was increasingly insecure and contemptuous. In addition to discussing their numerous letters of this decade, I will bring a number of texts under review: their Nobel Prize addresses, Faulkner’s defense of *Across the River and into the Trees* in *Time*, Hemingway’s reactions to it, Hemingway’s subtle but spiteful allusion to Faulkner in *Across the River and into the Trees*, Faulkner’s laudatory review of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway’s posthumous “The Art of the Short Story,” Faulkner’s positive invocations of Hemingway in *Requiem for a Nun* and *The Mansion*, Faulkner’s comments about Hemingway’s suicide, and what seems to be a mock-Faulkner passage written by Hemingway in an unpublished letter.

Chapter 5, “Rivals, Matadors, and Hunters: Textual Sparring and Parallels,” offers a more synthetic reading of common themes—both conscious and shared—in Hemingway’s *The Dangerous Summer* and the authors’ hunting texts: *Go Down, Moses*, *Big Woods*, *Green Hills of Africa*, and the posthumous *The Garden of Eden* and *Under Kilimanjaro*. As the parallels studied in this chapter suggest, Faulkner and Hemingway would be highly influential and mark each other’s works, self-constructions, and American letters more broadly. Each man acknowledged the other’s stature and influence but directed his energies to making himself look superior in texts and spoken comments, creating a nuanced relationship between two talented, strongly competitive, and proud writers. They competed throughout their careers, but they appreciated one another as artists and sometimes worked with similar material, despite their frequent sniping. Mixed emotions and creative overlap may have been inevitable between two such eminent egos and rivals.

*Note:* When quoting the authors’ correspondence, particularly Hemingway’s archival letters, I have maintained all errors and idiosyncrasies of spelling (e.g., “haveing,” “dis-sect”), style (e.g., contractions without apostrophes), capitalization, grammar, and title formatting. I have used brackets and [*sic*] where appropriate.